



SESSION 2 of 4

Jeremiah

MEETING AIM

To explore Jeremiah's message to God's people.

BIBLE PASSAGE

Jeremiah 1:1-10

BACKGROUND

Jeremiah is a long book with a lot to cover, so this session is designed to give a sense of who Jeremiah is, what his messages from God to the Israelites were, and how they might be relevant to us today. Throughout this book there is great warning and great encouragement from God to the Israelites. It's a real mixed bag, so it can seem confusing as God seems to swing between anger and love.

A helpful way of framing Jeremiah's warnings is to say that God loves us like a parent. He is on our side and loves us, but he wants us to be safe and close to him, so he'll warn us if he sees that what we're doing is bad for us. This session will explore these themes and help children make sense of the anger and warning alongside the loving encouragements.

5 CIRCLE TIME

Welcome the children into the group by name. Share out your refreshments and ask how their week has been. If you would like to introduce the topic gently at this point, encourage them to think about and share the phrases their parents or guardians often say, the things they get told to do or not to do, and the ways their parents tell them they love them.

10 INTRO ACTIVITY

This is an improvisation game. Stand the children in a circle and ask for three volunteers to stand in the middle. Explain that these volunteers are going to make up a scene about two parents and a child, or two children and a parent. They should think about how the parents might manage and parent the children.

As the first three actors improvise, any of the children standing in the circle can shout: "Freeze!" This child should then take the place of one of the actors and carry on the scene. Encourage the group to get talking and thinking about the roles of being a parent and a child.

Make sure the children give the actors a chance to develop the scene before they shout: "Freeze!" If it happens too often or one child is saying it too much, manage the group so that everyone has a turn.

15 BIBLE STORY

You will need: large sheet of paper or whiteboard; marker pens; Bibles

Read out Jeremiah 1:1-10 and ask the group to describe what is happening in the story to check that they have understood. Ask what they would have said to God if they had been Jeremiah.

Draw a large grid on your piece of paper or whiteboard. The grid should have two columns: one headed 'Warning' and the other 'Encouragement'. Split the children into three or four groups (ideally with a leader in each group) and give each one some of these Bible verses:

Jeremiah 2:26; Jeremiah 3:12; Jeremiah 3:22; Jeremiah 4:22; Jeremiah 5:20-25; Jeremiah 7:5-7; Jeremiah 8:9; Jeremiah 9:8-10; Jeremiah 11:7-8; Jeremiah 12:14-15; Jeremiah 13:17; Jeremiah 15:6; Jeremiah 17:5; Jeremiah 21:14; Jeremiah 23:11-12; Jeremiah 29:10-14; Jeremiah 30:10-11; Jeremiah 31:2-3; Jeremiah 31:8-9.

Ask the children to find them in the Bible (with leaders helping if necessary). Once they've found the passage, they should read it out to their group and decide whether the passage should go into the warning or encouragement list.

When everyone has finished, bring the children back together. Each group should share which column their passages belong in. Write each one down on your grid and then look at the split of warning and encouragement. Chat about what God might be saying to his people through Jeremiah.

10 CHATTING TOGETHER

Use this time to unpack some of the themes that have arisen in the Bible study. Ask the following questions to facilitate this discussion:

- Why did God warn the Israelites?
- Why do you think God also encouraged them?
- Is it strange that God both warned and encouraged the Israelites through Jeremiah's messages? Why?
- Is God scary or loving?
- How is God like a parent?

10 CREATIVE RESPONSE

You will need: wooden photo frames (you can buy them in bulk online); letter stamps and ink (or letter stickers); craft materials (such as stickers, beads, sequins, ribbon, printed paper)

The book of Jeremiah shows that God warns and encourages us, like a parent. God made us and loves us, and he wants us to be close to him. We are his children.

As a reminder of this, give everyone a photo frame to decorate. Encourage them to put letters around the photo frame as a reminder of this: something like 'God's child', 'Loved by God' or 'In God's family'. Then encourage them to have fun decorating the photo frame with things that represent them in colours and pictures. Encourage the children to take their photo frames home and ask their parents for a photo of themselves to put in the frame. Then they can put the photo frame somewhere in their house that might encourage and remind them that God is on their side.

5 PRAYER

You will need: reflective music and the means to play it

Ask the group: "What if God were to give you one warning and one encouragement today? What might it be?" Encourage them to close their eyes and think about this, and try and imagine or hear what God would say to them now. Play your reflective music (a particularly apt song might be Lex Buckley's 'Heaven rejoices', or you might pick a song that your church sings often and is familiar).

When the song finishes, pray a prayer for the group:

"God, you love us. Help us stay close to you and remind us that we're in your family. Amen."

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